

# **WEST DORSET WESTERN AREA TRANSPORT ACTION GROUP (WATAG)**

**Minutes of General Meeting No.87 held in the W.I. Hall, Bridport on 24th September 2015**

**Present:** Peter Body (Beaminster Town Council); Nick Boothroyd (Bridport Labour Party); Monica Burt (Bridport Area 50+); Tim Christian (DCT); Ron Coatsworth (DCC); John Collingwood (Bridport); Brian Cox (Bridport); Liz Dawe (44 route, Bridport); Bob Driscoll (Symondsburry Parish Council); Mike Farmer (Bridport); Alan Glenn (Askerswell); Ian Gray (DCT); John G Green (CPRE); Freda Hennessy (Corscombe PC); Matt Holborow (W&SDGP); T. G.. Jones (WATAG); Dominic Knorpel (POPP); Anna Lovell (BOPF/POPP); David Marsh (Thorncombe PC); Mary Marsh (Thorncombe); Tom Murphy (Churches Together); Simon Newport (First Wessex); G. D. Parr (West Bexington); Jane Richardson (Burton Bradstock); Erica Pretty (POPP); Sally Samuel (Yarn Barton Centre); Philip Sankey (Lyme Forward); Andy Shaw (DCC); Peter Smith (Chair WATAG); Valerie Smith (Bridport); Tony Taylor (Puncknowle&Swyre GPC); Daryl Turner (DCC); Dickie Webster (Bridport); Lottie Welch (View From); Alan Williams (WATAG).

**Apologies:** Sue Herman, Ros Kayes; Mike Nicks, Peter Ridler, John Snow.

**1. Minutes:** The minutes of the previous (86th) meeting were agreed.

**2. Matters arising not covered later:** none.

### **3. Re-routing issues on route 44**

Peter Smith read a message from Ros Kayes reporting that Dorset Highways had visited the Burton Rd/Chestnut Rd junction and had felt that there may be a case for altering the road to make it less steep and easier to navigate. Residents confirmed that the bus did not always ground at this point and were unhappy that the service had been withdrawn overnight without seeking to resolve the issue. They asked for the old bus to be restored. Ian Gray confirmed that he was aware that there were three proposals that could have been considered before the service was withdrawn. WATAG feel that the Traffic Commissioners based their decision on inaccurate information and may be asked to reconsider. It was suggested that the 73 could be used to run between the Valley Rd estate and Bridport. Ron Coatsworth pointed to the fact that X53 buses have to drive on the “wrong side of the road” to navigate through Abbotsbury.

### **4. News from Bus Operators:**

a) First.

First Dorset’s General Manager Simon Newport explained that the X51/X53 routes will not be serving Lyme Regis during the closure of Church St. Council funding has been agreed for an hourly shuttle service between Lyme Regis and Axminster from Mondays to Saturdays. It is not feasible to use alternative routes. The shuttle timetable is available at TIC’s and online. Bob Driscoll pointed out that the X51 from Dorchester to Bridport arrives at 18.09, the exact time the last X53 bus of the day leaves Bridport for Axminster. Simon Newport confirmed that drivers had been instructed to wait to allow passengers time to change. He stressed that the Bridport/Lyme Regis/Axminster section is the busiest part of the route and that First are aiming to generate more business on this stretch to build a fuller summer timetable on both services next year. Philip Sankey pointed out that Lyme Regis residents are affected by the reduced direct service to the Royal Devon & Exeter Hospital and reported that Devon County Council have arranged with Axe Valley Mini Travel to run four journeys to and from Lyme Regis and Seaton (via Rousdon) on Mondays to Fridays as service 899. Dominic Knorpel expressed great concern about the siting of the bus stops at the Raymond’s Hill (Hunter’s Lodge) intersection as they are within a few yards of a notoriously dangerous junction.

b) Damory

Although Damory did not send any representative to the meeting, it was reported that the 40 Bridport/Yeovil service continues to run well.

### c) Dorset Community Transport

DCT runs two buses which overload occasionally. The on-call service put forward to fill gaps in the 44 route will be withdrawn after two months without take-up. WATAG is anxious to minimize down-time on these vehicles and suggested that they could be offered as affordable transport to groups on a commercial basis. Thorncombe residents were concerned as the Tuesday-only service to Chard does not allow enough time for patients to collect prescriptions. Timings are difficult as the service is designed to run off the back of school contracts.

### d) Real time and on-bus information

Alan Williams noted that the 44 is not shown as going to West Bay and there is no timetable displayed outside the Nationwide stop in Bridport. On the eastbound X53, the audio system continues to announce “the next stop” for Pasture Way without specifying any stop.

## 5. Information from DCC including “Holistic Transport Review”

Andy Shaw introduced himself to the meeting and spoke of the new structure for “Travel Dorset”. He stated that the “Holistic Transport Review” was now chiefly concerned with how the DCC can fulfil its statutory obligations while cutting costs as far as possible. The council will not be publishing any further travel booklets this year, suggesting that the timetables produced by the bus companies will be sufficient.

## 6. Hospital Transport – reimbursement rate for those qualifying for refund.

Tom Murphy spoke of the report on patient hospital transport he submitted to the West Dorset Partnership earlier this month. The report makes it clear that the NHS refers most patients to self-funding voluntary schemes and that these schemes are struggling through lack of drivers. Dominic Knorpel felt that this situation denies equality of access to health as enshrined in the NHS’s Equality Delivery System. He added that all E-Zec seem to be able to say is NO”. Erica Pretty confirmed that POPP (Partnership for Older People Programme) and Dorset Transport are “aware of each other” and suggested that E-Zec come to the next meeting. Ron Coatsworth said that the parties concerned are blaming each other for the poor service offered. Anna Lovell pointed out Dorset County Hospital is “looking at guidelines” but need a letter from WATAG to re-examine the current 12p per mile reimbursement rate.

## 7. Railway News

The Honiton/Exeter line will close on 4<sup>th</sup> October for work on coping stones at the new Cranbrook station. The station’s opening date was unclear at the time of the meeting. There will be an enhanced service to London from Yeovil Junction with half-hourly instead of hourly services for much of the day.

## 8. Democratic Moment

DCC was asked if there had been any progress on arrival predictions on real-time displays and replied that the council was “hoping” for better coverage.

There being no other business the meeting closed at 8.15.

The next meeting is on Thursday 26<sup>th</sup> November 2015 at 6.30pm in the WI Hall North St Bridport

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